

## What is the Iowa Civil Rights Commission?

The Iowa Civil Rights Commission is a neutral fact-finding, law enforcement agency that enforces the “Iowa Civil Rights Act of 1965,” Iowa’s anti-discrimination law. We do not provide legal representation.

The Commission addresses discrimination in the following ways:

- Case resolution through intake, screening, mediation, investigation, conciliation, and public hearings
- Testing to determine the extent of discrimination in Iowa

## What is discrimination?

The “Iowa Civil Rights Act of 1965” prohibits discrimination in the areas of employment, housing, credit, public accommodations, and education.

Discrimination (different treatment) and harassment, is illegal if based on race, color, creed, national origin, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, pregnancy, physical disability, mental disability (excluding credit), age (in employment and credit), familial status (in housing and credit) or marital status (in credit).

## Who may file a complaint?

Any person who claims to be aggrieved or wronged by a discriminatory or unfair practice, as defined by the Iowa Civil Rights Act.

## How is a complaint filed?

A complaint is filed when received by the commission. To file a complaint, or to ask questions about filing a complaint, call 515-281-4121 or 800-457-4416 or visit <https://icrc.iowa.gov/> There is no charge for filing a complaint.

## Is there a filing limitations period?

Yes. Under Iowa law, a complaint usually must be filed within **300 days** of the alleged discriminatory practice.

## What happens after a complaint is filed (for most non-housing cases)?

A copy of the complaint is sent to the Respondent. Questionnaires are then mailed to both parties. The Commission staff will review the evidence provided to determine whether the collected information indicates a reasonable possibility of a probable cause determination and warrants further processing. Iowa Administrative Code 161-3.12(1)(f). If so, the case is “screened in.” If not, the case is administratively closed.

If the complaint warrants further investigation, the parties are offered an opportunity to resolve the complaint through a voluntary mediation process. The mediator is a neutral and impartial and the Commission utilizes volunteer attorneys as well as staff members who assist the parties to negotiate a no-fault resolution of the dispute.

If an agreement is not reached, the complaint will be investigated. The investigator will conduct a fair, impartial and thorough investigation. All relevant information is considered by the investigator.

If the evidence merits, the investigation will be presented to an administrative law judge. The judge reviews the collected information and determines whether there is **probable cause** to believe discrimination occurred. **Probable cause** exists if there are reasonable grounds for believing discrimination has occurred. If probable cause does not exist the administrative law judge can determine there is **no probable cause** (discrimination did not occur) and the complaint is dismissed.

If **probable cause** is found, the Commission attempts to negotiate the best settlement for the complainant and the people of Iowa. If negotiation fails, a decision is made whether to proceed to public hearing. The complainant is represented at the hearing by a representative from the Commission. With notice of public hearing, the complaint is no longer confidential. After hearing, the Commission makes a final decision whether discrimination occurred. If the Commission determines the Respondent violated the **Iowa Civil Rights Act**, the Commission will order appropriate “make whole” relief. Examples of Commission-ordered relief are: back pay and interest; actual expenses; an order to cease discriminatory practices; emotional distress damages, and reasonable attorney’s fees.

## How does the ICRC educate the public?

The Commission conducts workshops, seminars, and training sessions on a variety of civil rights topics as well as publishes and distributes materials on civil rights. A great deal of information is provided on our website as well as links to other sites that can provide information regarding discrimination laws.

## How do I contact the Iowa Civil Rights Commission?

The Commission can be reached by phone, via our website or in person at our office in the Grimes Building. For assistance, or if you have questions regarding our process or how to file a complaint, please call the Commission at **800-457-4416** or **515-281-4121** or visit our website at <https://icrc.iowa.gov/>.

## Relevant Portions of the Iowa Civil Rights Act

Ch. 216.6 It shall be an unfair or discriminatory practice for any person to refuse to hire . . . , to discharge any employee or to otherwise discriminate in employment against any applicant for employment or any employee because of the age, race, creed, color, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, national origin, religion or disability of such applicant or employee . . .

Ch. 216.7 It shall be an unfair or discriminatory practice for any owner, lessee, sublessee, proprietor, manager, or superintendent of any public accommodation or any agent or employee thereof to refuse or deny to any person because of race, creed, color, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, national origin, religion or disability . . .

Ch. 216.8 It shall be an unfair or discriminatory practice for any person, owner or person acting for an owner of rights to housing or real property . . . including . . . real estate brokers or salespersons . . . to refuse to sell, rent, lease, assign, sublease, refuse to negotiate, or to otherwise make unavailable, or deny any real property or housing accommodation or part, portion or interest therein, to any person because of the race, color, creed, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, national origin, disability or familial status of such person.

# Iowa Civil Rights Commission



“Our liberties we prize and our rights we will maintain.”

-Iowa State motto

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515-281-4121  
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*Our Mission is a state free of discrimination.*